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SUBJECT: Lebanon's Approach to the Environment and
Development: Using NGOs, Cost-Sharing

¶11. The message was prepared by the Amman ESTH office,
and cleared by Embassy Beirut.

¶12. Summary: With Arab and international funding, Lebanon
is making innovative use of NGOs and cost-sharing plans
to manage natural resources, water, forests, health and
development. USAID makes important contributions in all
these areas. End summary.

¶13. Amman-based Environment, Science, Technology and
Health (ESTH) Hub FSN visited Lebanon March 21-24 for an
overview of environment, development, and health issues.

Ministry of Environment

¶14. ESTH FSN met with Dr. Berj Hatdjian, Director General
at the Ministry of Environment, and Ms. Nancy Khoury, the
Acting Head of the Division of Public Relations and
External Affairs on March 24. The MOE was established in
1993 and has a USD 3 million budget. The MOE worked with
ECODIT Lebanon to produce the 2001 State of Environment
Report. It is available on the web at
<http://www.moe.gov.lb/Reports/SOER2001.htm>. The report
describes the state of Lebanon's water, air,
biodiversity, and land, and links them to population,
agriculture, industry, construction, transport, tourism,
recreation, and energy. The report paints a bleak
picture, calling water conservation "dismal," especially
in view of the fact that agriculture consumes 70% of
Lebanon's water but produced only about 12% of its GDP.
It also identified a number of regulatory and enforcement
shortfalls, and stressed the need for more consideration
of environmental impacts at the planning stage.

Seeking to Develop a Water Resource Plan

¶15. Water is becoming a factor limiting Lebanon's
development, and will become more precious as the
population grows. Since agriculture consumes 60 to 70
percent of Lebanon's water supply, Lebanon needs to
address the efficiency of irrigation.

¶16. The General Directorate of Hydraulic Resources has
adopted a 10-year plan, including the following specific
articles:

-- increasing drinking and irrigation water supply in the
summer;
-- collecting and treating more wastewater;
-- reducing the estimated 50 percent loss of water in
distribution systems;
-- shifting the cost of providing water supply and
wastewater treatment from the state to consumers; and
-- increasing the effectiveness of water institutions.

Development and Sharing Plans for Surface Water

¶17. Management of surface water is crucial to Lebanon's
overall water strategy. Dr. Salim Catafago, Chairman of
Litani River Authority (LRA) and a member of the Lebanese-
Syrian Joint Water Committee, told ESTH FSN on March 21
that Lebanon has three major rivers: the Litani, which
flows only within Lebanon; and two rivers shared with
Syria, the Orontes and the Nahr El-Kabir rivers.

¶18. The Litani is the most important river in Lebanon,
with an annual maximum flow of about 700 million cubic
meters. Dr. Catafago described a two-phase, USD 440-500
million project for the Litani River. The first phase
will build main conveyors, canals, pipes and pumping
stations and the second phase will develop irrigation
canals. The cost for phase one is estimated at USD 220
million, of which USD 165 million was given as a low-
interest loan from the Kuwaiti Fund and the Arab Fund.
The Lebanese government will supply the rest of the
financing. Catafago does not expect the GOL to contract
Phase I before the end of the year, and noted that it
will take two years to complete the work. Catafago is
trying to secure additional funding from the Kuwaiti and
Arab Funds for Phase II.

¶19. The Orontes River starts north of Baalbeck and flows

through Syria before entering Iskenderun and emptying into the Mediterranean Sea. Its annual flow is more than 400 million cubic meters (MCM.) In 2002, the Syrian-Lebanese Higher Council approved a dam on the Orontes River under an agreement that allocates an average of 80 MCM to Lebanon.

¶10. The Nahr El Kabir River also flows from Lebanon into Syria. It is Lebanon's northern border with Syria. Its mean yearly incoming flow is around 150 MCM. Syria and Lebanon have agreed on sharing the Nahr El Kabir, with 60 percent of its annual flow going to Syria and 40 percent to Lebanon.

USAID Using Cost-Sharing on Wastewater Treatment Sites

¶11. USAID is working with the GOL on wastewater treatment, another important aspect of Lebanon's overall water management plan. ESTH FSN and AID FSN toured USAID-funded wastewater treatment plants in some of the Chouf villages on March 23. One USAID-funded treatment plant in the Maaser el Chouf village costs USD 398,000, of which USD 278,000 comes from USAID and USD 120,000 from the Municipality of Maaser El-Chouf and the Union of Higher Chouf Municipalities. A second USAID-funded wastewater treatment plant at Mukhtara and Butmeh villages costs USD 498,000, of which USD 331,000 is funded by USAID and USD 167,000 is funded by the municipalities of Mukhtara and Butmeh and the Union of Higher Chouf Municipalities.

Forestry Development

¶12. Mr. Fadi Abu Ali told ESTH FSN at their March 23 meeting that the Association for Forest Development and Conservation (AFDC) was established in 1993 to increase forest cover, manage natural resources, promote eco-tourism, raise awareness, especially among local community members, and build capacity for better environmental management. AFDC works with the Jordanian Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) to build capacity in AFDC's staff.

¶13. One aspect of AFDC's work is a forest fire-fighting program to develop a national-level mechanism to prevent and fight forest fires through involving the local community. AFDC is recruiting volunteers from local communities who are trained to combat forest fires in the most important conservation areas.

GLOBE Program - 22 Schools, Supported by Cisco Systems

¶14. AFDC also manages the GLOBE program. Lebanon has participated in the Global Learning and Observation to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) program since a 1998 agreement between the Ministry of Environment and Embassy Beirut. GLOBE in Lebanon is currently supported by Cisco Systems and AMIDEAST. Twenty-two private and public schools from around Lebanon participate in GLOBE. Mr. Abu Ali from AFDC mentioned that GLOBE faces financial difficulties and that, since in many instances students pay for their training trips, GLOBE is less accessible to students of moderate means.

Al-Chouf Cedar Nature Reserve

¶15. In an interesting NGO project, the Al-Shouf Cedars Nature Reserve is managed by the Al-Shouf Cedars Society, an NGO that conceived the idea of the reserve, created it, and currently manages it in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment. ESTH FSN visited the reserve on March 23. The objectives of the Society are natural and cultural conservation, research and monitoring, rural development, eco-tourism, environmental awareness, and capacity building. As an important contribution to the Society's outreach efforts, USAID gave the Society USD 28,000 to publish a booklet and a CD on the biodiversity of the reserve.

World Health Organization Using Cost-Sharing Funds

¶16. On Thursday, March 24, Econoff and ESTH FSN met Dr. Talal Abbas, World Health Organization (WHO) Accident and Injury Prevention Program Coordinator. Dr. Talal said the WHO Office in Lebanon provides direct technical, administrative, and financial support to various joint projects between the WHO, the Ministry of Health (MOH) and programs established by the MOH with cost-sharing trust funds. Such programs aim at improving the health of the Lebanese people and strengthen the management and system of the health sector.

¶17. The Accident and Injury Prevention Program started in late 1999 as a joint effort between the Ministry of Health and WHO and aims at decreasing accidents and preventing injuries. In 2002, WHO and MOH expanded the program to cover traffic accidents, childhood injuries, occupational injuries, violence against women, child

abuse, and emergency preparedness. In 2003, the program started implementing activities, and it developed a plan of action on Injury and Accident Prevention for 2003-2005.

¶18. Comment: As a result of Lebanon's central government weaknesses in environmental and health issues, the NGO sector stepped in to fill the vacuum, gained in vitality, and is making major contributions to the health and natural resources sectors of Lebanon.

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